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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSUL 000031

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SUBJECT: KURDISH POWER PLAY IN MOSUL: PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT REQUESTS
FULL TRANSITION OF SECURITY TO IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

REF: MOSUL 24

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CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial
Reconstruction Team Ninewa, State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) Ninewa Provincial Government leaders called for the immediate transfer of security operations from Coalition Forces (CF) to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). During a meeting with the PRT and MNF-N, Governor Duraid Kashmoula, Vice Governor Khasro Goran, and Provincial Council Chair Salem Haj Issa claimed Mosul residents were resentful of continued CF presence, which has undermined their credibility with the public. While security has improved markedly since the fall of the city to terrorists in November 2004, we doubt whether the Iraqis are as capable as they think they are. We view the attempt by a lame-duck, predominantly Kurdish, provincial government -- that saw Sunni Arabs take a majority of seats from Ninewa during the national election -- to assert its authority and ensure continued Kurdish control of power in the province. End Summary and Comment.

2. (SBU) PRT Leader and MNF-N met with Ninewa Governor Duraid Kashmoula, Vice Governor Khasro Goran, Provincial Council Chair Salem Haj Issa, Provincial Chief of Police (PCOP) Wathiq Al Qudir, and Provincial Chief Judge Fasial Hadeed in Mosul on March 14. PRT IPAO met with Governor Duraid Kashmoula and Vice Governor Khasro Goran at Ninewa Provincial Hall on March 9.

CALL FOR TRANSFER OF SECURITY OPERATIONS NOW

3. (C) During a meeting with MNF-N and the PRT, provincial government leaders called for the immediate transition of security operations from Coalition Forces (CF) to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Governor Kashmoula asked for a meeting soon with MNF-N and ISF officials to discuss intelligence sharing for transfer of the battle space command. Kashmoula said he believed sole ISF presence inside of Mosul would be beneficial for everyone, especially CF and the USG, for political, security, and economic reasons. Kashmoula said the sooner the change took place they more legitimate the ISF would be. Vice

Governor Goran said the Iraqi Police (IP) had a great deal of responsibility, but that CF needed to give it more leeway with handling security. Kashmoula, Provincial Council Chair Issa and PCOP Al Qudir recommended that CF be stationed on the periphery to serve as a quick response force when called on by ISF.

¶4. (C) Al Qudir claimed the public viewed terrorism in the city as a "jihad" against CF, and that moving CF out of the city would help better the public's perception of the security situation. During an earlier meeting with the PRT, Kashmoula said he was upset by what he saw as misstatements about the transfer of security from Coalition Forces (CF) to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in Mosul. He claimed Mosul residents resented this and faulted him for misleading them, which has undermined his and the provincial government's credibility. Kashmoula said he was concerned that these types of actions by CF would create more unrest and ill will towards Americans.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) We are skeptical about the Iraqi request. While their desire to put more of an Iraqi face on security operations is admirable and speaks well to any potential drawdown of CF in the country, realities on the ground suggest that Kashmoula, Issa, and Goran have other advantages in mind. Since terrorists overran Mosul in November 2004, the city has continued to improve markedly with regards to security thanks in large part to CF efforts, as was noted in a presidential speech at the end of last year. It may be that the provincial government, made up of predominantly Kurds and Kurdish sympathizers, is working to assert its influence before provincial elections slated for later this year. The request for a rapid transfer of operational authority from CF to ISF over the next few months would be a way of "delivering" something to constituents (reftel).

¶6. (C) Why have more of an IA presence, specifically, in Mosul?

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The IA 2nd Division is commanded by MG Jamaal, a former Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Peshmerga commander, and its forces are still mainly Kurdish. Goran, himself a KDP leader as well as vice governor, has been playing this card for some time now. For example, he told the PRT on numerous occasions that he would like more 2nd Division IA presence in Mosul, requesting on one occasion that the IA should have five or six checkpoints in the center of the city, contrary to CF and Al Qudir's wishes (reftel). Perhaps the Kurds saw the writing on the wall during the national election, where Sunni Arabs political parties took a majority of seats from Ninewa in the national assembly. It could be that the current government believes that ISF control of security, especially before the elections, would allow the Kurds to assert their authority and influence over politics in the mostly Sunni Arab city. In short, the current provincial government should probably be seen as little more than a tool of Kurdish ambition in Ninewa, and the request for the immediate transfer of security operations for what it is: a ploy to enhance the political fortunes of the current provincial government and its backers in Kurdistan.

MUNTER